

Skamania County

Enhancing Quality
of Life and the Environment:

Timber Payments
to Counties:

In years past, sales tax revenue from timber sales on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest provided funding for local community schools, roads, hospitals, and other emergency services. With the decline of the timber industry, local communities have suffered a downturn in the economy and their ability to pay for local services and education. To help these communities, Congressman Baird helped to pass the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. Of all the counties in our state, Skamania and Lewis Counties receive the largest payments from this program. The counties have used this funding for forest enhancement projects such as removing culverts, thinning overstocked plantations, and habitat restoration. They have also applied the money to critical county needs, such as road maintenance, education, fire prevention, and search and rescue.

This legislation, which has been so helpful to our counties for the past five years, is now set to expire in 2006. Congressman Baird is working with other members of the Northwest delegation, to reauthorize this important legislation and provide continued funding for an additional seven years.

Family Forest Habitat Conservation
Plan (FFHCP):

Timber is part of our heritage in the Pacific Northwest and family forests play a vital role in our regional economy and way of life. Nationally, family forest farms provide essential habitat for 90 percent of all endangered species, including endangered salmon in the Northwest. Unfortunately, Western Washington is losing family forest land at a rate of 100 acres a day - 56 square miles a year - as the land is converted to non-forest use. To ensure that family forest land is optimally managed, and to help family foresters meet environmental standards, Congressman Baird is working to obtain funding from the Habitat Conservation Planning Grants to implement the Family Forest Habitat Conservation Plan for Lewis County, Washington.

Rather than broad-brush regulatory approaches, which often neglect smaller, family-owned forests, the Family Forest Habitat Conservation Plan will allow family forest owners to create long-term management options that will benefit their business and protect the environment. This approach provides a critical solution to the challenges facing small forest landowners and agencies in the HCP process.

Air Quality:

The U.S. Forest Service and the Columbia River Gorge Commission are charged with maintaining the scenic Columbia River Gorge. Management of air quality and visibility has been an issue in the Gorge for years. In order to identify pollution control measures, a study is needed to identify point source polluters contributing to air quality and visibility conditions in the Gorge. Congressman Baird secured \$675,000 for the Southwest Clean Air Agency (SWCAA) to begin a Columbia Gorge Phase I Technical Foundation Study to study air quality issues in the Gorge.

Franz Lake National Wildlife Refuge and Mosquito Issues:

Congressman Baird was approached by the Skamania County Mosquito Control Board, the County Commissioners, and private citizens regarding increased mosquito population in Skamania County, particularly in the Franz Lake National Wildlife Refuge area. The Skamania County Mosquito Control Board was unable to treat the Franz Lake National Wildlife Refuge for mosquitoes with chemicals for fear of the impact to juvenile listed salmon species in the area.

Baird and Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell brought the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Skamania County Mosquito Control Board, and Skamania County together to resolve issues regarding the treatment of the Franz Lake NWR for mosquitoes. As a result, the Skamania County Mosquito Control District received a special use permit to treat and monitor areas near Franz Lake. In addition, the USFWS will be mowing areas of canary reed grass and performing several studies over the next three years to determine if increased levels of treatment for mosquitoes can take place.

Upper White Salmon River:

The White Salmon River, which feeds into the Columbia River between Underwood and White Salmon Washington, is known for its exhilarating whitewater rapids, stunning scenery, and abundant fish and wildlife. In 1986, the river's outstanding qualities received national recognition when Congress designated the lower eight miles of the White Salmon as a National Wild and Scenic River. Congress also directed the Forest Service to study the upper White Salmon for possible designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Congressman Baird introduced Upper White Salmon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate a portion of the upper White Salmon River as a component

of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. This designation will preserve the river's free-flowing nature and enhance tourism and foster economic growth by protecting its natural beauty. It has received broad public support within the local community and throughout the region, including the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Friends of the White Salmon River, and American Rivers.

Mount St. Helens:

To protect the safety of communities located near Mount Saint Helens, Congressman Baird worked to secure an additional \$1.5 million for the United States Geological Survey to monitor and research volcanic activity in Mount St. Helens. As Mount Saint Helens has come back to life in recent months, this funding will increase the safety of citizens living near the area and help protect commercial aircraft.

Increasing Public Safety and Combating Crime:

Methamphetamine:

As a founding member of the Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine, Congressman Baird has diligently worked to provide Washington communities with funding to fight this menace. Baird's efforts have helped to bring in more than \$11 million to combat methamphetamine use and clean meth contaminated sites in Washington state.

Improving Federal Law Enforcement:

As Southwest Washington communities continue their rapid growth, we must make sure that law enforcement framework is in place to deter crime and hold criminals accountable for their actions. Local law enforcement approached Congressman Baird with concerns that a greater federal law enforcement presence was needed in Southwest Washington. With recent growth, Clark County became the fifth largest in our state, yet the surrounding region had no full-time federal magistrate or prosecutor to investigate serious federal crimes such as bank robbery and other offenses. The nearest federal district court and U.S. Assistant Attorney from which a warrant could be obtained was in Tacoma, 140 miles north of Vancouver. Because of this difficulty, federal crimes committed in Southwest Washington were often prosecuted under state or local laws, and at lower numbers, failing to hold criminals fully accountable for crimes they committed.

Congressman Baird worked with local law enforcement officials and the U.S. Attorney for Western Washington to bring an enhanced federal law enforcement presence to Southwest Washington. On November 10, 2003 the Federal Investigative Center officially opened in Vancouver. The new center provides a centralized office for federal agents from

the U.S. Marshals Service; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF); Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Postal Inspection Service into a single Vancouver headquarters. By having a single, coordinated location to work from in our area, these agencies can share information and resources and will be much more successful in pursuing cases.

Making Government more Effective and Efficient:

Streamlining the environmental permitting process:

Protecting the environment is always a priority, but regulatory processing and permitting have become unnecessarily costly and time consuming. In recent years, Congressman Baird has organized a series of meetings throughout Southwest Washington to bring local business leaders, farmers, builders, ports and others together with federal, state and local officials to improve the permitting process. As a direct result, several federal and state agencies have made significant progress in streamlining permits, reducing application backlogs and complexity, and improving coordination to expedite the process. There is still work to be done, and much room for improvement, but Congressman Baird will continue to work with the consumers of permits and agency representatives to push for further improvements in efficiency and savings in time and money.

Wind River Nursery Conveyance:

In order to help Skamania County bring economic growth to the region, Congressman Baird worked closely with local elected officials and with the U.S. Forest Service to help Skamania County take possession of the Wind River tree nursery. This beautiful and historical setting encompasses 187 acres, as well as historic buildings and warehouse. Currently, a redevelopment team is working to explore ways of utilizing this area for economic growth.

Protecting Mental Health Care:

Mental Health Coverage under Medicaid:

For the past 11 years Washington state has used federal Medicaid funds in conjunction with state funds to provide mental health care to Medicaid eligible patients as well as to patients who need service but do not qualify for Medicaid. In April 2004, the federal agency that oversees Medicaid and Medicare, CMS, required that, effective January 1, 2005, the state cease using their Medicaid

funds to serve patients who do not qualify for Medicaid. This change, which came at a time the State Legislature was out of session and could not meet to solve the problem, threatened to suddenly terminate mental health care for 40,000 patients across our state.

As a former clinical psychologist who has worked in community mental clinics, Congressman Baird understands the importance of mental health care in our communities. With the proper sustained treatment, people who would otherwise be debilitated by their illness can be functioning, contributing members of society. When he learned of the proposed rule change by CMS and the potential loss of treatment for patients in need, Congressman Baird took immediate action.

After consulting with members of the legislature and state agencies, Congressman Baird personally contacted administrators at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The Congressman drew upon his own professional background to explain the needs of the patients and the harm that could result from terminating their services. He then requested an extension be granted to give the state time to arrange alternative funding to continue the care. To their great credit, officials within CMS were willing to work closely with the Congressman and the state and in late December a six month waiver was granted, extending care through June 2005. This measure will save the state of Washington over \$20 million and, more importantly, will allow 40,000 of our citizens to continue to receive the care and treatment they need to be productive, functioning members of our communities.

Skamania
County

City
of North Bonneville

City
of Stevenson

Port
of Skamania

Columbia
Gorge Economic Development Association

Mid-Columbia
Economic Development District

Skamania
Chamber of Commerce

Columbia
River Gorge Commission

Columbia
Gorge Interpretive Center

Skamania
County Economic Development Council

Skamania
County PUD

Lewis
and Clark Expedition

Educational
Service District 112

Washington
State Government Information & Services